

**Injection** drug users (IDUs) are at risk for HIV infection by sharing syringes and other equipment with HIV-infected individuals and by engaging in risky sexual behavior. It is estimated that there are approximately one million active IDUs in the United States (CDC, 2007). In 2009, injection drug users accounted for nine percent of the new HIV infections nationwide, with an additional 3% attributed to men who have sex with men, who also have a history of injecting drugs (MSM-IDU)\*. The HIV incidence estimates from CDC shows that along with racial/ethnic and sexual minorities, IDUs continue to be disproportionately affected by the epidemic (Prejean, 2011).

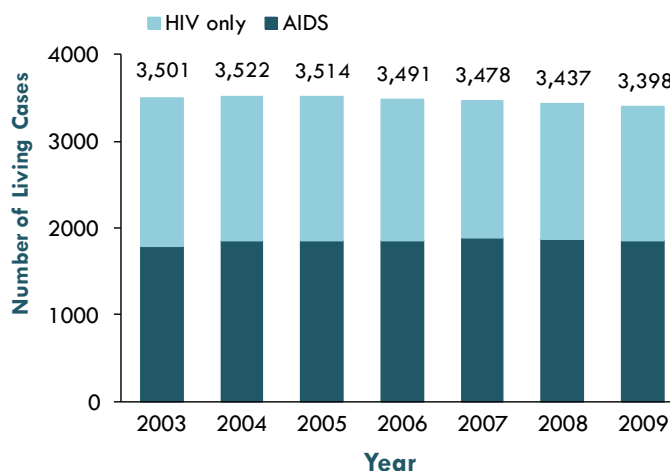
Data from 34 states with established confidential, named-based HIV surveillance indicate that IDU represented 13% of HIV diagnoses during 2004-2007. This group is largely composed of males (62%), Blacks (58%), and persons living in urban areas at the time of diagnosis (75%). White and Hispanic/Latino IDUs accounted for 21% and 19% of this population, respectively. In addition, approximately 40% of IDUs with HIV were diagnosed late and progressed to AIDS within 12 months of their HIV diagnosis (CDC, 2009a).

CDC's National HIV Behavior Surveillance System interviewed more than 10,000 IDUs between May 2005 and February 2006, 33% reported sharing syringes, 59% reported sharing injection equipment, 63% reported having unprotected vaginal sex, and 48% had more than one partner of the opposite sex in the 12 months before the interview. Lastly, 66% reported testing for HIV infection in the preceding year and 30% stated that they participated in individual or group HIV behavioral intervention (CDC, 2009b). To reduce the prevalence of HIV infection and late diagnosis among this risk group, the CDC recommends comprehensive HIV prevention programs that incorporate access to HIV testing, community-based outreach, drug abuse treatment, and syringe exchange programs (CDC, 2009a).

## HIV/AIDS PREVALENCE†

Among the 22,257 persons living with HIV disease in Virginia as of December 31st, 2009, an estimated 3,998 (15%) attributed their infection to injection drug use. Nearly 55% of this population had progressed to AIDS. The majority of known HIV-positive IDUs living in Virginia at the end of 2009 were males (62%). By race/ethnicity, Blacks accounted for 76% of all living HIV-positive IDUs, while Whites accounted for 18% and Hispanics for 5%. MSM-IDUs were excluded from this analysis.

**IDUs Living with HIV Disease in Virginia, 2003-2009**



## HIV DISEASE DIAGNOSES†

From 2005-2009, there were 398 HIV disease diagnoses in Virginia attributed to injection drug use, or nearly eight percent of the total number of diagnoses. Sixty-one percent of IDU cases were among men and 39% were among women. MSM-IDUs were excluded from this analysis.

## By Age at Diagnosis

IDUs tend to be diagnosed later in life, which suggests they might be continuing high-risk behaviors at older ages, or that they are more likely to be tested and diagnosed late (CDC, 2009a). In Virginia, 35% of IDU diagnoses were among 40-49 year-olds; those who were 50 or older at the time of diagnosis accounted for another 32%. Persons younger than 39 represented 33% of all IDU cases.

## By Race/Ethnicity

The majority of IDU cases (75%) were among non-Hispanic Blacks; Black men accounted for 75% of all IDU cases among males, and Black women for 77% of the cases in females. Whites represented 16% of total IDU cases, Hispanic 7%, and the last two percent were among Asians/Pacific Islanders, American Indians/Alaskan Native, those who are multi-racial and others.

## MSM-IDU

Men who have sex with men and also inject drugs (MSM-IDU) are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection due to having multiple risk factors. They can also transmit the virus to multiple populations, including MSM, IDU, and heterosexual women. Thus HIV prevention for this risk group must provide access to drug treatment programs, education, and counseling to reduce both sexual and drug-related risk behaviors (CDC, 2000).

At the end of 2009, there were 1,144 MSM-IDU living in Virginia; 57% had progressed to AIDS. During 2005-2009, there were 126 diagnoses of HIV disease attributed to MSM-IDU in the Commonwealth. Blacks represented the majority (52%) within this group while Whites accounted for 38%, higher than within the IDU-only population (16%) or within other risk behavior groups such as MSM or heterosexual.

## REFERENCES

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\*Data presented in the national HIV incidence report are annual estimates of the number of new infections, whether or not they were actually diagnosed. In contrast, Virginia data are based on new diagnoses each year, which can include persons who were infected in previous years. These two sets of data cannot be directly compared.

†Data and percentages presented are estimates of the IDU and MSM-IDU transmission categories using the CDC provided multiple imputation procedure for cases reported without an identified or reported risk.